

## A Short Guide to Living in Tartu, Estonia

This guide was written by a Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) professor and Fulbright Scholar who taught at the University of Tartu from August 2011 – June 2012. The opinions expressed here are those of the professor, her husband and children (ages 12 and 8) who made discoveries about what to bring, where to eat and which Estonian phrases to master through trial and error. Their opinions do not reflect those of the US State Department or NWU. This guide is designed to supplement the materials students receive from NWU and the University of Tartu, and those that scholars receive from the US State Department and the American Embassy in Tallinn.

### What to Bring

Euros (about 300€ to get started)

A credit card with no currency exchange fees

Umbrella

Winter coat, scarf, hat, mittens, water-proof boots (woolens can be purchased here, see below)

Excellent walking shoes (Estonians wear sneakers, but not bright white ones)

Insect repellent (only spring semester)

Any brand name personal item that you cannot live without (deodorant, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, contact lens solution, etc.) These products are widely available here, but in fewer brands.

Peanut butter (If you happen to love it. You will not find any American peanut butter here).

Laptop (you will find **free Wi Fi** nearly everywhere)

An E-reader to easily purchase English language books

## Taking the Bus from Tallinn Airport to Tartu

Arrive at the airport. Collect your luggage. Exit the airport. Walk to the Takso (taxi) stand. It is located just outside the main exit. Ask a taxi driver to take you to the Bussijaam (bus station). Have the word written down just in case he does not understand you (many cab drivers in Tallinn only speak Russian and/or Estonian and your pronunciation will not be the same as theirs). This cab ride is short and will cost around 10 Euro. You DO NOT need to tip the driver.

Buses take passengers to Tartu from the Tallinna Bussijaam every hour. To get a bus ticket at the Tallinn station, go to the counter and ask for an Express ticket to Tartu. The bus station accepts cash payments. At present the price of a bus ticket to Tartu was 10.50 Euro. Ten minutes before the hour the agent stops selling tickets for that bus and you need to purchase a ticket from the driver with cash.

Put your luggage underneath the bus. Find your seat. Bus tickets are for assigned seats. If you end up in someone else's seat they will ask you to move. If you get on the bus very late, however, it might be best to sit in whatever seat is open. Daytime buses are often full.

The bus ride will take about two and a half hours. Most of the buses have free Wi Fi.

The bus will make several stops in Tartu before ending up at the Tartu Bussijaam.

You will exit the bus at the front of the bus station. Get your luggage. There is a Takso stand right next to the station (on the small street leading to the back of the station and into the Tasku shopping center).

Ask a driver to take you to your dorm or residence. Make sure you have the address written down so you can show it to him. You might think you can pronounce the address in Estonian, but you probably cannot. Hand the driver the address to avoid complications. Taxi drivers in Tartu speak Estonian. The trip to the international dorm will be short and will probably cost about 6 Euros. Make sure you have cash. You DO NOT need to tip the driver. Even though your dorm is within walking distance of the station, I strongly encourage you to take a taxi. It is cheap and will save you a lot of stress and hassle.

PLEASE NOTE: At press time the Tallinn buses have begun a new service. Each bus that departs the Tallinna Bussijaam first stops at the airport before going on to Tartu. You should be able to exit the airport, find the bus stop, purchase a ticket from the driver and avoid the taxi trip to the Tallinn bus station altogether. There is no guarantee, however, that the next bus will have a seat available for you.

<http://www.bussireisid.ee/index.html?MENU=&KEEL=en>

**Language Guide** – The vast majority of people in Estonia speak English. Still, you should learn basic expressions to be courteous and it will be helpful to be able to read signs. Pronounce all of the syllables in the words.

Estonian Language Learning Games <http://www.digitaldialects.com/Estonian.htm>

Audio Program, Free Download <http://www.byki.com/category/Estonian/a>

Tere – hello

Aitäh – Thank You

Palun – please/you are welcome

Nagemist OR Head Aega – goodbye

Jah – yes

Ei – no

Vabandust – sorry, excuse me

Vabandage – sorry, excuse me (polite form, best to use with elderly people)

Kuidas läheb? - How are you?

Hästi – fine

Mis sinu nimi on? - What is your name?

Minu nimi on \_\_\_\_\_. – My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

Kui palju see maksab? - How much does it cost?

Kas te räägite inglise keelt? – Do you speak English?

Bussijaam – bus station

Ülikool – university

Pank – bank

Turg – outdoor market

Postkontor – post office

Takso – taxi

Tualett – toilet          mees – man – (M)          naine – woman – (N)

WC (common sign for bathrooms, water closet)

Many bathrooms are unisex

### **Days of the week**

Esmaspäev – Monday

Teisipäev – Tuesday

Kolmapäev – Wednesday

Neljapäev – Thursday

Reede – Friday

Laupäev – Saturday

Puhapäev – Sunday

### **Numbers**

Üks – one

Kaks – two

Kolm – three

Neli – four

Viis – five

Kuus – six

Seitse – seven

Kaheksa – eight

Üheksa – nine

Kümme – ten

Üksteist – eleven

Kaksteist – twelve

Kolmteist – thirteen

Kakskümmend – twenty

Kakskümmendüks – twenty one

Kolmkümmend – thirty

Kolmkümmendüks – thirty-one

Sada – 100

### **Military Time** (used in Europe)

1:00 PM – 13:00

2:00 - 14:00

3:00 – 15:00

And so on.

12:00 midnight is 24:00

### **City of Tartu**

[http://www.tartu.ee/?lang\\_id=2](http://www.tartu.ee/?lang_id=2)

### **Tartu City Buses**

Tartu has an excellent public transportation system. Riding the bus is a great way to see the outskirts of the city. Everything you will need, however, is available within walking distance of the university or at Lõunakeskus (described later).

Purchase bus tickets at any R Kiosk. These small huts are located all over town, but it is difficult to find English speaking clerks at R Kiosks. You can buy bus tickets in books of ten. Tickets are inexpensive. Monthly passes are available for adults, university students and children.

Board the bus, punch your ticket into one of the small red contraptions attached to a post at the front of the bus or in the middle of the bus. Make sure you have a ticket for each ride and make sure you punch it. The politsei (police) board the buses at random times and at random stops to check tickets. If you do not have one you will be issued a large fine.

<http://tartu.peatus.ee/#city/eng>

### **Bank**

Swedbank (Turu 1) – branches and ATMs located throughout Tartu

[www.swedbank.ee/private/home/start](http://www.swedbank.ee/private/home/start)

### **Restaurant Price Guide**

€ = 1 - 5 Euros/meal

€€ = 6 - 10 Euros/meal

€€€ = 10+ Euros/meal

### **Our Family's Favorite Restaurants**

La Dolce Vita (Kompanii 10) - excellent affordable pizza and Italian food. €€

<http://www.ladolcevita.ee/>

Püssirohukelder (Gun Powder Cellar) (Lossi 28) - Estonian food, fun atmosphere, historic landmark, loud in the evenings. €€€

<http://www.pyss.ee/index.php?page=26>

Werner (Ulikooli 11) - the best and most affordable cake in Tartu, excellent soup and full meals, 10% discount with your University of Tartu ID. € for cakes and soup, €€ for meals.

<http://www.werner.ee/>

Moka (Kuutri 3) – excellent food, expensive for dinner, lunch prices are reasonable. €€€

<http://www.moka.ee/#>

### **Good Restaurants**

Shakespeare Café (Vanemuise 6) – located in the Vanemuine Theatre wonderful ambiance, good Estonian food, €€ <http://www.shakespeare.ee/>

Zum Zum – Estonian food. <http://zumzum.ee/> €€

Tsink Plenk Pang (Kuutri 6) – good Asian food, overpriced. <http://pang.ee/> €€€

Wilde Irish Pub and Café (Vallikraavi 4) – Estonian favorite, good prices. €€

<http://www.vilde.ee/>

Wilde Health Café (Vallikraavi 4) – located on the first floor of same building that houses Wilde, excellent soup and salad lunch buffet: buffet €, meals €€. <http://www.tervisekohvik.ee/>

Rotunda -a round café on top of Dome Hill, low prices, excellent soup, omelets and crepes. €

<http://www.visittartu.com/513?org=5741&l=59915>

Café Truffe (Raekoja plats 16) – excellent food, expensive. <http://www.truffe.ee/> €€

Chocolaterie Pierre (Raekoja plats 16) – excellent coffee, cakes, expensive meals. €€€

<http://www.pierre.ee/est/pierre-chocolaterie-tartu/>

Runnipizza –serviceable inexpensive food. <http://www.ruunipizza.ee/> €

McDonald's - tastes just like home, only American milkshakes in Tartu (one located near the Bussijaam, the other within walking distance of Lõunakeskus. €€

## Shopping Centers and Grocery Stores

Kaubamaja Mall – nice stores, great grocery store (see below) <http://www.kaubamaja.ee/et>

Kaubamaja (located in the bottom floor of the mall also called “Kaubamaja”) – This is the best grocery store for meat, bread, produce and cakes. Excellent lunches from the bakery (such as spinach croissants, weinerpirkuas, and quiche for 1-2 Euros). Sign up for the Partner discount card upstairs at the Customer Service desk in the Kaubamaja Department Store. Show the card every time you purchase something from the grocery store or the department store and you will receive a small discount. The card is also accepted in a few other stores in the mall.

Comarket – inexpensive grocery store, buy everything here that you did not get at Kaubamaja.

<http://www.comarket.ee/>

Tasku Mall –Fancy stores, more expensive than those in Kaubamaja

<http://www.tasku.ee/index.php?page=3&>

Rimi – grocery store in the basement of Tasku (mall), high prices and poor selection; adequate bakery, sells very good 8 cent rolls and it is the only place in town with American mustard. Sign up for a discount card (Sinu Rimi) with one of the clerks and show it every time you purchase something.

Lõunakeskus – free bus to this large indoor shopping mall, “Lõunakeskus Express” it stops at the Bussijaam and Kaubamaja. Very nice clothing stores, few food options, large Hyper Rimi on main level (akin to a Super Target), full size ice skating rink inside, skate rental available.

<http://www.lounakeskus.com/>

<http://lounakeskus.com/files/bussigraafikuus.pdf> (Express Schedule)

## Best Food Items (also the least expensive)

Cake of all kinds

Yogurt

Bread, bread, bread

Dairy products

Pirukas (pies filled with meat, cabbage, wieners, etc.)



Kohupiim (delicious sweet cheese found in pirukas, some yogurts and our favorite Kohuke bars in the dairy case)

Chocolate – Kalev is best

Gingerbread

Soups

Smoked salmon

Coffee (kohv)

Hot cocoa (kakao)

Hot chocolate (actual liquid chocolate)

### **Cell Phones**

Purchase a cell phone and cards (in 5 Euro, 10 Euro increments) from any electronics store or Elisa (a cell phone store) in the basement of Kaubamaja. The cheapest phone is 20 Euro. They work very well. When you program your phone you need to choose the language. The Estonian word for language is “keel.”

### **Good Buys in Tartu** (these identical items are nearly triple the price in Tallinn)

Woolens – hand knit mittens, hats, scarves, sweaters, socks, gloves, etc.

Baltic Amber – beautiful amber jewelry native to the region

Wooden handicrafts

Sheepskin slippers, rugs, hats

Kalev chocolate

### **Best Tartu Sites**

Raekoja Plats (Town Hall Square)

KGB Cells Museum (Ria Mnt 15b) <http://linnamuseum.tartu.ee>

Estonian National Museum (Kuperjanovi 9) [www.erm.ee](http://www.erm.ee)

Museum of University History and Tartu Cathedral (Toomemägi – Cathedral Hill) (Lossi 25)  
[www.ut.ee/ajaloomuuseum](http://www.ut.ee/ajaloomuuseum)

St. John's Church (Jaani 5) [www.jaanikirik.ee](http://www.jaanikirik.ee)

Botanical Gardens (Lai 38) [www.ut.ee/botaed](http://www.ut.ee/botaed)

Tartu Toy Museum – a children's museum best for children under 10 years of age  
<http://www.mm.ee/>

Vanemuine Theatre – excellent performances, many are subtitled in English (musicals, plays, symphony concerts). Estonia is a country that produces and funds excellent choirs and musicians of all kinds. See all you can!

<http://www.vanemuine.ee/eng>

Cinamon Movie Theatre – Located on the top floor of Tasku. Most films are in English with Estonian and Russian subtitles. The only films that are dubbed are children's movies such as cartoons and CGI movies. When you purchase your ticket you will be asked to choose your seat. Go early to buy tickets or learn how to purchase them on the website. You should also register for a free Cinamon Boonuskaart. With it you will receive a discount for every movie ticket you purchase. Ask a clerk to help you register.

<http://www.cinamon.ee/?id=39>

### **Beyond Tartu – Best Sites to See in Estonia**

Old Town Tallinn – storybook beauty, amazing history

[http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee/fpage/explore/attractions/old\\_town](http://www.tourism.tallinn.ee/fpage/explore/attractions/old_town)

Narva Castle (Hermann Castle) (in Narva, Estonia, on Russian border)

[http://www.narvamuuseum.ee/?lang=eng&next=linnus&menu=menu\\_ajalugu](http://www.narvamuuseum.ee/?lang=eng&next=linnus&menu=menu_ajalugu)

Pärnu - on the Baltic Sea; best in warm weather

<http://www.inyourpocket.com/estonia/parnu>

<http://www.parnu.ee/lang/eng/>

Saaremaa - beautiful Estonian island, popular with locals and tourists

[http://www.saaremaa.ee/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=765&Itemid=384&lang=en](http://www.saaremaa.ee/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=765&Itemid=384&lang=en)

Haapsalu – lovely coastal town south of Tallinn,

<http://www.haapsalu.ee/index.php?lk=300&langtest=1&setlng=13>

### **Tallinn Hotels**

Hotel Ülemiste - within walking distance of the Tallinn Airport, affordable for singles and doubles, breakfast included <http://hotel-ulemiste-tallinn.h-rez.com/index.htm?lbl=ggl-en&cid=334649>

Reval Park Hotel and Casino – affordable hotel near Old Town, breakfast included

<http://www.parkhotel.ee/>

Tallink Express Hotel – within walking distance of Old Town and steps away from Port of Tallinn and boats to Helsinki, Finland. <http://hotels.tallink.com/en/mainMenu/exprHotel/default.htm>

### **Pärnu Hotel**

Scandic Rannahotell - right on the beach, breakfast included

<http://www.scandichotels.com/hotels/countries/estonia/parnu/hotels/scandic-rannahotell/>

### **Saaremaa Hotel**

Jurna Recreation Farm – lovely gardens, hospitality, perfect for a family vacation, great breakfast <http://www.saaremaa.ee/jurna/21.html>

### **Travel Guides for Estonia**

*Estonia: Cultural Tourism*. Kunst Publishers.

Lonely Planet's *Estonia, Latvia & Lithuania*.

Thomas Cook's *Estonia*.

*Tartu In Your Pocket* – free download, <http://www.inyourpocket.com/estonia/tartu>

*Tallinn In Your Pocket* – free download, <http://www.inyourpocket.com/estonia/tallinn>

**Public School Education for International Students – grades 1 – 12**

Miina Härma Gymnasium – Tonisson 3, 50409 Tartu - our children spent an excellent year here, please contact me if you have questions about our experience

<http://mhg.tartu.ee>

Ms Irja Toots

IB Coordinator

Office: +372 736 1923

Mobile: +372 52 96 892

[irja.toots@mhg.tartu.ee](mailto:irja.toots@mhg.tartu.ee)